

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Original) A method, comprising:
receiving from an educational institution an indication of a refund amount associated with a student of the educational institution;
determining a method of refund delivery associated with the student; and automatically arranging for the refund amount to be provided to the student in accordance with the determined method of delivery.
2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the method of delivery comprises one of: (i) an electronic transfer of the refund amount to a bank account associated with the student, (ii) a paper check mailed to an address associated with the student, and (iii) a transfer of the refund amount to a credit account associated with the student.
3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein a total refund amount is transferred from an account associated with the educational institution to a group holding account at a facilitating bank, the total refund amount representing refunds for a plurality of students, and further comprising: providing information to the bank indicating a set of students along with a portion of the total refund amount associated with each student.
4. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein a total refund amount is transferred from an account associated with the educational institution to an escrow account, the total refund amount representing refunds for a plurality of students, and further comprising: arranging for the total refund amount to be transferred from the escrow account to a group holding account; and providing information to the bank indicating a set of students along with a portion of the total refund amount associated with each student.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein a plurality of refund amounts are transferred from an account associated with the educational institution to a plurality of temporary holding accounts associated with a plurality of students.

6. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein a total refund amount is transferred from an account associated with the educational institution to an escrow account at a bank, the total refund amount representing refunds for a plurality of students, the method further comprising: instructing the bank to transfer from the escrow account a first refund amount associated with a first student.

7. (Original) The method of claim 6, wherein the bank is to transfer the first refund amount from the escrow account to one of: (i) a temporary holding account, (ii) a bank account associated with the first student at another bank via an electronic funds transfer, (iii) the student via a paper check sent via postal mail, and (iv) a non-temporary account associated with the first student at the bank.

8. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the received indication includes at least one of: (i) an educational institution identifier, (ii) a student identifier, and (iii) an indication of the refund amount.

9. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising: verifying the received indication.

10. (Original) The method of claim 9, wherein said verifying includes at least one of: (i) comparing refund amounts associated with a plurality of students to an amount currently available in an escrow account, (ii) comparing the refund amount to a pre-determined threshold limit, (iii) comparing a student identifier with a list of existing student identifiers; (iv) calculating a hash value associated with the received indication, and (v) calculating a checksum associated with the received indication.

11. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising: generating a refund information report.
12. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising: performing a refund information search.
13. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the educational institution is associated with at least one of: (i) a university, (ii) a college, (iii) a technical school, (iv) a professional education program, (v) a government training program, and (vi) an on-line educational program.
14. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising: receiving from the student an indication of a preferred method of delivery.
15. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein the indication is received from the student via a communication network.
16. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein the preferred method of delivery comprises deposit to a bank account previously distributed to the student via the educational institution.
17. (Original) The method of claim 16, wherein the bank account is associated with a student identification card.
18. (Original) The method of claim 16, further comprising: receiving, via the educational institution, information associated with the student; and arranging for the bank account to be created for the student based on the received information.
19. (Original) The method of claim 18, wherein the bank account comprises at least one of: (i) a demand deposit account, (ii) a negotiable order of withdrawal account, (iii) a money market account, (iv) a savings account, (v) an asset management account, and (vi) a brokerage account.

20. (Original) The method of claim 18, wherein said arranging comprises: establishing a soft bank account based on the received information; receiving an indication of acceptance associated with the member; and activating the soft bank account in response to the received indication.

21. (Original) The method of claim 20, wherein the indication of acceptance includes security information.

22. (Original) The method of claim 20, wherein the indication of acceptance is received via at least one of: (i) the member, (ii) the educational institution, (iii) a merchant, (iv) a public network, (v) a private network, (vi) a telephone call, (vii) the Internet, and (viii) a representative.

23. (Original) The method of claim 18, wherein the received information comprises at least one of: (i) a Social Security number, (ii) a member identification number, (iii) a name, (iv) a date of birth, (v) an address, (vi) a telephone number, (vii) a student/local address, (viii) a student/local telephone number, (ix) a graduation date, (x) a status, (xi) a major, (xii) an electronic mail address, (xiii) a drivers license number, (xiv) a passport number, (xv) citizenship information, (xvi) barcode information, (xvii) a parent name, (xviii) a parent address, (xix) image information, and (xx) an educational institution identifier.

24. (Original) An apparatus, comprising:

a processor; and

a storage device in communication with said processor and storing instructions adapted to be executed by said processor to: receive from an educational institution an indication of a refund amount associated with a student of the educational institution; determining a method of refund delivery associated with the student; and automatically arranging for the refund amount to be provided to the student in accordance with the determined method of delivery.

25. (Original) The apparatus of claim 24, wherein said storage device further stores at least one of: (i) a student database, and (ii) a refund database.

26. (Original) The apparatus of claim 24, further comprising: a communication device coupled to said processor and adapted to communicate with at least one of: (i) a refund controller, (ii) an educational institution device, (iii) a member device, and (iv) a bank device.

27. (Original) A medium storing instructions adapted to be executed by a processor to perform a method, said method comprising:

receiving from an educational institution an indication of a refund amount associated with a student of the educational institution;

determining a method of refund delivery associated with the student; and automatically arranging for the refund amount to be provided to the student in accordance with the determined method of delivery.

28. (Withdrawn) A method, comprising: receiving, from an educational institution, information associated with a refund to be provided to a student of the educational institution; and arranging for a transfer of payment with the educational institution in exchange for at least one of: (i) facilitating the transfer of the refund amount to the student, and (ii) facilitating the transfer of refund amounts to a plurality of students.

29. (Withdrawn) A method, comprising: receiving an indication of a payment amount associated with an educational institution member; arranging for the payment amount to be transferred from an escrow account that is associated with a plurality of members to a holding account that is associated with the member who will receive the payment amount; and arranging for the payment amount to be transferred from the holding account to an account associated with the member.

30. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 29, wherein the member comprises at least one of: (i) a student, (ii) an educational institution employee, and (iii) an alum.

31. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 29, wherein the payment amount is transferred from the holding account in accordance with a method of delivery that is preferred by the member.

32. (Withdrawn) A method, comprising: receiving at a bank a total payment amount associated with a plurality of parties, wherein the payment amount is stored in an escrow account; receiving at the bank an indication of a payment amount associated with a party; transferring the payment amount from the escrow account to a holding account; and transferring the payment amount from the holding account to another account associated with the party.
33. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 32, wherein the payment amount is transferred from the holding account in accordance with a method of delivery that is preferred by the party.
34. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 32, wherein payment amount represents money to be transferred from an institution to the party.
35. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 34, wherein the institution comprises at least one of: (i) a corporation, (ii) a government entity, and (iii) a charitable organization.